CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A newspaper vending machine, comprising:
   (a) container means for storing a stack of newspapers;
   (b) inventorsy means disposed within said container means for indicating a quantity of newspapers stacked in said container means;
   (c) transmission means for transmitting wireless messages; and
   (d) control means coupled to said inventorsy means and to said transmission means for causing said transmission means to transmit a low-inventorsy wireless message upon a detection by said inventorsy means of a low-inventorsy condition.

2. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein adjacent newspapers in the stack of newspapers are in direct contact along substantially their entire surfaces.

3. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the stack of newspapers is stored within an otherwise empty storage space within said container means.

4. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein the low-inventorsy wireless message also identifies a location of said newspaper vending machine.

5. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein said inventorsy means detects a weight of said stack of newspapers.

6. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein said inventorsy means detects a height of said stack of newspapers.

7. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, wherein said transmission means is configured for at least one of: communications over a cellular communications network and satellite communications.

8. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, further comprising a battery for powering said transmission means and a solar electric panel for recharging said battery.

9. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, further comprising access monitoring means coupled to said control means for monitoring when said container means is opened.

10. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 9, wherein said access monitoring means comprises a magnetic reed switch.

11. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, further comprising receiver means for receiving incoming wireless messages and display means for visually displaying said incoming wireless messages.

12. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 1, further comprising camera means for capturing images.

13. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 12, wherein said transmission means transmits at least some of said captured images.

14. A newspaper vending machine, comprising:

(a) a container having a lockable access door, said container being sized for storing a stack of newspapers;

(b) a coin-activated mechanism for unlocking said access door;

(c) a pressure-detection sensor disposed on a bottom surface of said container;

(d) a wireless transmitter; and

(e) a control processor having an input that is electrically coupled to said pressure-detection sensor and an output that is electrically coupled to said wireless transmitter,

wherein upon a detection by said pressure-detection sensor that pressure has fallen below a threshold, said control processor causes said wireless transmitter to transmit a real-time wireless message indicating said detection.

15. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein adjacent newspapers in the stack of newspapers are in direct contact along substantially their entire surfaces.

16. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein the stack of newspapers is stored within an otherwise empty storage space within said container.

17. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein the wireless message also identifies a location of said newspaper vending machine.

18. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein said pressure detection sensor comprises a spring-loaded switch.

19. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein said wireless transmitter is configured for communication over a cellular communications network.

20. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein said wireless transmitter is configured for satellite communications.

21. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, further comprising a battery for powering said wireless transmitter and a solar electric panel for recharging said battery.

22. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, further comprising a switch electrically coupled to the control processor, wherein the

switch is in a first state when the lockable access door is closed and is in a second state when the lockable access door is opened.

23. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 22, wherein the switch is a magnetic reed switch.

24. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 14, wherein upon the detection by said pressure-detection sensor that pressure has fallen below the threshold, said control processor waits a specified period of time and causes said wireless transmitter to transmit the wireless message only if the pressure remains below the specified threshold after the specified period of time.

25. A system for monitoring plural newspaper vending machines, comprising:

(a) plural newspaper vending machines, each comprising:

(i) container means for storing a stack of newspapers;

(ii) inventorsy means disposed within said container means for indicating a quantity of newspapers in said container means;

(iii) transmission means for transmitting wireless messages; and

(iv) control means coupled to said inventorsy means and to said transmission means for causing said transmission means to transmit a low-inventorsy wireless message upon a detection by said inventorsy means of a low-inventorsy condition; and

(b) a base station for receiving said low-inventorsy wireless message and transmitting a corresponding message to a pre-designated recipient via at least one of a cellular wireless network and a hard-wired network.

26. A system according to claim 25, wherein, for each of the plural newspaper vending machines, adjacent newspapers in the stack of newspapers are in direct contact along substantially their entire surfaces.

27. A system according to claim 25, wherein, for each of the plural newspaper vending machines, the stack of newspapers is stored within an otherwise empty storage space within said container means.

28. A system according to claim 25, further comprising a report server, and wherein the corresponding message transmitted by the base station is transmitted to the report server.

29. A system according to claim 28, wherein the report server initiates the transmission of at least one of an email message and a cellular wireless message in response to its receipt of the corresponding message from the base station.

30. A system according to claim 28, wherein the report server hosts a Website providing a current status of each of the plural newspaper vending machines.

31. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 25, wherein, for each of the plural newspaper vending machines, the low-inventorsy wireless message also identifies a location of said newspaper vending machine.

32. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 25, wherein, for each of the plural newspaper vending machines, said inventorsy means comprises at least one of: a weight sensor and means for detecting a height of said stack of newspapers.

33. A newspaper vending machine according to claim 25, wherein, for each of the plural newspaper vending machines, said transmission means is configured for at least one of: communications over a cellular communications network and satellite communications.